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INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	DINT-00	DOTE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	DCP-01
	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/009W		
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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2659
INFO NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//J5/FPA// PRIORITY
DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 07 HANOI 000985

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV, DRL, INR
NSC FOR EAST ASIAN DIRECTORATE
SECDEF FOR ISA/EAP STERN

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR VM DPOL

SUBJECT: POLITBURO MEMBERS WERE PORTRAYED AS UNITED IN OFFICIAL MEDIA IN RUN-UP TO PARTY CONGRESS

REF: A) HANOI 965 B) HANOI 952

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR JAMES BRUNO;
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

2. (C) SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION: OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, IN THE RUN-UP TO THE JUST-COMPLETED NINTH COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS, VIETNAM'S OUTGOING POLITBURO MEMBERS WERE PORTRAYED IN STATE-CONTROLLED MEDIA AS UNITED IN THE PARTY'S EFFORTS TO RALLY SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAM OF THE CONGRESS. BEHIND THE SCENES, THOUGH, A FIERCE INTERNAL STRUGGLE RAGED THAT RESULTED IN THE REPLACEMENT OF GENERAL SECRETARY PHIEU AND SIX OTHER POLITBURO MEMBERS (REFTELS).

SIPDIS

DURING THIS PERIOD, ALL SENIOR LEADERS JOURNEYED AROUND THE COUNTRY TO ATTEND PROVINCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONGRESSES. SOME OF THESE LEADERS, SUCH AS DEPUTY PM CAM AND HO CHI MINH ACADEMY HEAD BINH, CLEARLY RECOGNIZED AND ACCEPTED THEY WERE WINDING UP THEIR POLITBURO CAREERS. OTHERS, HOWEVER, SUCH AS PHIEU, FATHERLAND FRONT LEADER DUyet, DEFENSE MINISTER TRA, AND ARMY POLITICAL COMMISSAR NGAN, WOULD HAVE KNOWN THEY WERE FIGHTING FOR THEIR POLITICAL LIVES. BY CONTRAST, THE OTHER RISING STARS OF THE CPV -- SUCH AS SOUTHERN REFORMERS TRIET AND DUNG, AS WELL AS NORTHERN IDEOLOGUE TRONG -- WERE CONSOLIDATING THEIR POSITIONS CONFIDENT THEY WOULD BE LEFT STANDING.

3. (C) SUMMARY (CONT'D): NOW THAT A NEW LINEUP HAS BEEN REVEALED, IT IS INSTRUCTIVE TO ANALYZE WHAT BROUGHT THE LEADERSHIP TO THIS POINT, AND HOW THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
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ACTIVITIES OF THE LARGELY SECRETIVE POLITBURO CONTRIBUTED TO THE FALL OR MAINTENANCE IN POWER OF ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS. IN PARTICULAR, WE SEE THE RISE IN RANK OF TRIET AND DUNG AS FORETELLING THEIR SOON-EMERGENCE AS THE CHAMPIONS OF REFORM AT THE MOST SENIOR RANKS. THIS CABLE IS THE SECOND OF A TWO-PART SERIES DOCUMENTING THE PUBLIC APPEARANCES OF POLITBURO MEMBERS IN THE OFFICIAL VIETNAMESE PRINT MEDIA SINCE OCTOBER 1, 2000. (REF A ANALYZED THE NEW LEADERSHIP LINEUP, AND REF B INCLUDED DETAILED PROFILES OF PHIEU AND HIS SUCCESSOR, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN NONG DUC MANH.) THIS CABLE ANALYZES THE REMAINING 16 MEMBERS OF THE OUTGOING POLITBURO.

"PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACES" OF THE OUTGOING POLITBURO

4. (SBU) WITH THE NEW POLITBURO AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED APRIL 22, IT IS AN INSTRUCTIVE MOMENT TO ANALYZE WHAT BROUGHT THE SECRETIVE VIETNAMESE LEADERSHIP

TO THIS POINT. AS PART OF THE EMBASSY'S ONGOING TRACKING PROJECT OF THE PUBLIC FACES OF THE POLITBURO IN THE VIETNAMESE MEDIA OVER THE PAST YEAR, WE HAVE DOCUMENTED THE APPEARANCES OF THE MOST SENIOR COMMUNIST PARTY (CPV) MEMBERS IN VIETNAM'S MAJOR DAILY PAPERS. WE HAVE FOCUSED PARTICULARLY ON THE CPV MOUTHPIECE "NHAN DAN" (THE PEOPLE) AND TWO LEADING DAILIES IN THE LARGEST CITIES: "NEW HANOI" AND "SAIGON LIBERATION." WHILE NOT A COMPREHENSIVE LISTING, THIS GIVES US A GOOD SURVEY OF HOW THE LEADERSHIP IS FEATURED IN THE MOST PROMINENT OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS.

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15. (SBU) IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS, FROM OCTOBER 1-MARCH 31, IN THE RUN-UP TO THE NINTH COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS, WE CONTINUED TO SEE THE SAME TRENDS DOCUMENTED PREVIOUSLY: ROUGHLY HALF OF THE POLITBURO HAVE POSITIONS WITH LARGELY "PUBLIC" FACES THAT INVOLVE SIGNIFICANT APPEARANCES IN THE PUBLIC EYE, WHILE THE OTHER HALF WORK LARGELY OUT OF THE PUBLIC EYE IN POSITIONS DEALING WITH INTERNAL CPV AFFAIRS. FOR THIS ANALYSIS, WE EXAMINED THE LEADERSHIP IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

-- A) "THE ONCE AND FUTURE LEADERS" WHO THROUGHOUT THE PAST YEAR HAVE OCCUPIED THE TOP SLOTS, HAVE HAD HIGH PUBLIC VISIBILITY, AND CONTINUE TO HAVE IMPORTANT POSITIONS IN THE NEW POLITBURO;

-- B) "SENIOR RETIRING PUBLIC FIGURES" WHO WERE THE OUTGOING POLITBURO ELDERS WITH HAD RELATIVELY HIGH PUBLIC PROFILES, BUT BECAUSE OF AGE, HEALTH AND/OR POOR PERFORMANCE WERE REPLACED AT THE CONGRESS;

-- C) "CONTINUING POLITBURO MEMBERS WITH LOW PUBLIC PROFILES" WHO REMAINED IN THE POLITBURO DESPITE LOW PUBLIC PROFILES;

-- D) "MEMBERS WITH LOW PUBLIC PROFILES WHO WERE REPLACED," WHO INCLUDE THOSE POLITBURO MEMBERS WHO WERE ONLY RARELY FEATURED IN THE MEDIA AND WHO WERE RETIRED AT THE CPV CONGRESS.

END SUMMARY/INTRODUCTION.

OTHER "ONCE AND FUTURE LEADERS"

16. (C) TRAN DUC LUONG, 63, THE STATE PRESIDENT, MAINTAINED HIS SECOND-RANKED POSITION IN THE NEW POLITBURO LINEUP. THERE HAD BEEN GREAT SPECULATION IN RECENT MONTHS ABOUT WHETHER LUONG WOULD SURVIVE IN POWER OR EVEN BE PROMOTED TO GENERAL SECRETARY; IN THE END, THIS STEADY IF UNSPECTACULAR OFFICIAL REMAINED IN PLACE. LUONG, WHO WAS FEATURED ON 64 OCCASIONS IN THE OFFICIAL PRESS DURING THE OCTOBER-MARCH PERIOD, WAS GENERALLY PRESENTED IN PROTOCOL SITUATIONS GREETING FOREIGN LEADERS, THOUGH HE TOO (LIKE ALL OTHER POLITBURO MEMBERS) ATTENDED PROVINCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CPV CONGRESSES THROUGHOUT THE FALL. LIKE PHIEU, LUONG FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN COVERAGE OF HANOI'S 990TH ANNIVERSARY IN EARLY OCTOBER. HE RECEIVED ASEAN INFORMATION MINISTERS (OCT. 13); MET PRESIDENT CLINTON (NOV. 17); VISITED CHINA AND MET WITH JIANG ZEMIN, ZHU RONGJI AND LI PENG (DEC. 25-29); RECEIVED THE CAMBODIAN FOREIGN MINISTER (FEB. 6), THE SINGAPOREAN PRESIDENT (FEB.

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8), THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT (MARCH 2) AND THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTER (MARCH 8). HIS SCHEDULED TRIP TO CAMBODIA WAS ABORTED BECAUSE THE BORDER AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES REMAINED INTRACTABLE. HE LIKEWISE VISITED FLOODED REGIONS OF THE MEKONG DELTA AND CENTRAL HIGHLANDS IN LATE OCTOBER, ATTENDED THE HANOI AND HO CHI MINH CITY CPV CONGRESSES, ADDRESSED THE NGHE AN PARTY CONGRESS (JAN. 19), AND WAS FEATURED ATTENDING THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUMS. NOW THAT THE CONGRESS HAS CONCLUDED, RUMORS CIRCULATE THAT LUONG COULD BE SWITCHED TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN NEXT MONTH, WITH MANH TAKING THE COMBINED POSITIONS OF GENERAL SECRETARY AND PRESIDENT. (HOWEVER, IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY DUNG, TRIET OR AN WOULD MOVE TO THIS POST.) OTHER REPORTS SUGGEST LUONG MAY REMAIN IN PLACE FOR A YEAR OR TWO, AND THEN REPLACED, LIKE KHAI, BY A YOUNGER COLLEAGUE.

17. (C) PRIME MINISTER PHAN VAN KHAI, WHO IS 67, WAS THE OLDEST SENIOR LEADER TO SURVIVE PAST THE PARTY CONGRESS. RANKED THIRD IN BOTH THE OLD AND NEW CPV RANKS, KHAI WAS WIDELY ASSUMED TO BE ON HIS WAY OUT DURING MUCH OF THE PAST SIX MONTHS. HE OFFERED TO RESIGN TWICE IN THE PAST YEAR AND SEEMED DISPIRITED AND BLASE IN MANY OF HIS OFFICIAL APPEARANCES WE WITNESSED. (COMMENT: IN RETROSPECT, WE SURMISE HIS LONG BITTER CONFLICT WITH PHIEU MAY HAVE LED TO HIS DEEP FRUSTRATION, AND IN THE POST-PHIEU ERA, KHAI MAY

HAVE A CHANCE FOR A NEW RENAISSANCE. END COMMENT.)
DESPITE KHAI'S FRUSTRATIONS, DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS HE
KEPT A BUSY SCHEDULE BEFITTING THE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT.
FEATURED 71 TIMES IN THE PRESS, HE WAS DEPICTED CHAIRING
THE INTERAGENCY GOVERNMENT COUNCIL IN ITS MONTHLY MEETINGS,
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AND HE WAS PICTURED AT THE OPENING OF THE PLENUM MEETINGS
OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND THE OPENING OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY SESSION IN OCTOBER. HE CHAIRED MEETINGS TO
ADDRESS THE CONSEQUENCES OF FLOODING IN SOUTHERN PROVINCES
AND TO SPUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL REGIONS. HE GAVE
THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS TO THE HO CHI MINH CITY PARTY CONGRESS
DEC. 19, ATTENDED THE HANOI CONGRESS DEC. 27, ADDRESSED THE
PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES PARTY CONGRESS JAN. 4, AND SPOKE TO
THE VIETNAM FATHERLAND FRONT MEETING IN HCMC IN FEBRUARY.
HE HOSTED VISITING PRIME MINISTERS AND PRESIDENTS FROM
LUXEMBOURG, ALGERIA, INDIA, AND RUSSIA, AS WELL AS THE
UNESCO DIRECTOR GENERAL, AND HE MET WITH PRESIDENT CLINTON
IN NOVEMBER. ON NOVEMBER 24 HE REPRESENTED VIETNAM AT THE
4TH INFORMAL ASEAN SUMMIT. HE MADE PROVINCIAL WORKING
VISITS TO HAIPHONG, YEN BAI, HA NAM, BA RIA-VUNG TAU, DONG
NAI, SON LA, AND LAI CHAU, THE LATTER WHERE HE TOURED
EARTHQUAKE-STRIKEN AREAS. (COMMENT: FROM KHAI'S RATHER
PERFUNCTORY APPEARANCES IN PUBLIC OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS,
ONE WOULD NOT HAVE PREDICTED SEVERAL MONTHS AGO HE WOULD
SURVIVE PAST THE CONGRESS. IN THE END, THE BACKROOM
POLITICKING THAT BROUGHT MANH TO POWER AND DUMPED HIS
NEMESIS PHIEU LEFT KHAI STANDING AT THE END OF THE
BLOODLETTING. END COMMENT.) A NUMBER OF SOURCES,
INCLUDING FORMER SENIOR ADVISOR VO VAN KIET, HAVE SUGGESTED
KHAI WILL REMAIN IN PLACE UNTIL NEXT YEAR, PERHAPS THE
FALL, WHEN A NEW PRIME MINISTER IS EXPECTED TO BE NAMED.

18. (C) HO CHI MINH CITY COMMUNIST PARTY CHIEF NGUYEN MINH
TRIENT, 58, WAS PROMOTED TO FOURTH IN THE NEW POLITBURO
RANKINGS, FROM HIS PREVIOUS POSITION OF SIXTEENTH OF 18.
CONSISTENTLY RANKED WITH ASSEMBLY SPEAKER NONG DUC MANH AS
ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR LEADERS IN THE POLITBURO, TRIENT
APPEARS TO HAVE BENEFITED FROM HIS POPULARITY AMONG
SOUTHERN REFORMERS, INCLUDING SENIOR ADVISOR VO VAN KIET,
WHO PRESSED HIM AS A POSSIBLE GENERAL SECRETARY. TRIENT WAS
FEATURED 29 TIMES IN NATIONAL MEDIA. LIKE HANOI PARTY
CHIEF TRONG, HE PRESIDED OVER DISTRICT CONGRESSES OF THE
HCMC PARTY LEADING UP TO HIS READING OF THE DRAFT POLITICAL
REPORT AT THE DECEMBER 19 CITY CONGRESS, AND HE SPOKE AT
SEVERAL OF THE CITY'S DISTRICT MILITARY CONGRESSES AS WELL.
DECEMBER 23 HE WAS FORMALLY REELECTED CHAIR OF THE HCMC
PARTY. HE RECEIVED VISITING DELEGATIONS FROM THE CHINESE
COMMUNIST PARTY IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER. TRIENT REVIEWED
THE ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMS OF HIS CITY, VISITED FLOOD-
STRIKEN PROVINCES ON THE CITY'S OUTSKIRTS IN OCTOBER, MET
WITH THE CPV YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES, MADE A SPEECH
COMMEMORATING THE CPV'S FOUNDING IN FEBRUARY, AND WELCOMED
THE FATHERLAND FRONT AND CONSTITUENT GROUPS FOR MEETINGS IN
HCMC. ACCORDING TO SOME SOURCES, TRIENT HAS BEEN DESIGNATED
AS THE LIKELY SUCCESSOR TO KHAI AS PRIME MINISTER. (THE
OTHER PRIME CANDIDATE IS DEPUTY PM DUNG, WHO ALSO WAITS IN
THE WINGS AS A YOUNG SOUTHERN REFORMER. BECAUSE TRIENT AND
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DUNG HAVE SIMILAR PEDIGREES, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT EXPECTED
GOVERNMENTAL CHANGES TO BE ANNOUNCED BY THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY NEXT MONTH MAY SUGGEST WHO IS THE BEST-POSITIONED
"HEIR" TO KHAI.) REPORTS CIRCULATE THAT TRIENT (OR DUNG)
MAY MOVE TO REPLACE MANH AS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN.
BOTH INCUMBENT PM KHAI AND HIS PREDECESSOR KIET FIRST
SERVED AS DEPUTY PM BEFORE MOVING UP, AND IF TRIENT INDEED
IS BEING GROOMED FOR PM, HE MIGHT MOVE NEXT MONTH TO BECOME
FIRST DEPUTY PM. (UNDER THIS SCENARIO, DUNG MIGHT MOVE TO
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OR ANOTHER SENIOR POST.)

19. (C) FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN TAN DUNG, 51,
RETURNING TO THE FIFTH-RANKING SLOT HE HELD THREE YEARS AGO
(BEFORE A NOMINAL "DEMOTION"), ALSO RANKS AS ONE OF THE
"NEXT GENERATION" OF LEADERS IN THE CPV. HE PLAYED AN
IMPORTANT, BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE IN REACHING AGREEMENT TO
INITIAL THE BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. IN THE
SUMMER OF 1999, AND IN THAT, AND IN OTHER DIFFICULT ISSUES,
HE HAS PLAYED KEY "FIX-IT" ROLES TO GET THINGS DONE. UNTIL
LAST YEAR HE SERVED AS ACTING HEAD OF THE STATE BANK AND
RECEIVED GENERALLY GOOD MARKS FOR HIS SERVICE, THOUGH HE
HAD NO BACKGROUND IN BANKING PRIOR TO THAT EXPERIENCE.
SHORTLY AFTER UNREST BROKE OUT FROM LARGE DEMONSTRATIONS IN
THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS IN EARLY FEBRUARY, DUNG WAS
DISPATCHED TO GIA LAI TO MONITOR AND HELP MANAGE THE
SITUATION ON THE GROUND. WE KNOW LITTLE OF WHAT HE
ACTUALLY DID, AND THE VISIT WAS NOT REPORTED IN STATE
MEDIA. HOWEVER, TO OUR EYE THESE ASSIGNMENTS REVEAL HE IS
A KEY MEMBER OF THE LEADERSHIP, THOUGH IT PPEARS HE HAS
BOTH STRONG SUPPORTERS AS WELL AS OPPONENTS AMONG THE
LEADERSHIP. (SOME MAY RESENT HIS RAPID RISE: A POLITBURO
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MEMBER ONLY SINCE 1996, DUNG ROSE TO FIFTH IN THE CPV RANKS BEFORE BEING BOUNCED TO 15TH IN THE FORMAL ORDER IN 1997 AROUND THE TIME OF PHIEU'S ASCENT TO POWER. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO WATCH HOW DUNG FARES IN THE POST-PHIEU ERA.) DURING THE TRACKING PERIOD, DUNG WAS FEATURED 34 TIMES, LARGELY IN HIS ROLE AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WITH A MAJOR ROLE IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC AFFAIRS. DUNG ACTS FOR PM KHAI AS NEEDED; HE ROUTINELY READS THE GOVERNMENT'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC REPORT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR ONE OF THE TWO SESSIONS EACH YEAR, AND HE CO-CHAIRMANED THE GOVERNMENT'S CABINET MEETING IN OCTOBER. HE CHAIRED A CONFERENCE ON DEALING WITH FLOODS IN DONG THAP PROVINCE AND MEETINGS ON IMPLEMENTING THE 2001 BUDGET, AND HE HELD A WIDE VARIETY OF MEETING WITH VISITING OFFICIALS, SUCH AS THE DIRECTOR OF THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK. HE VISITED QUANG NINH PROVINCE WITH PHIEU IN OCTOBER, AND QUANG NGAI, DAKLAK, BINH PHUOC, AND OTHER PROVINCES ON HIS OWN. IN MID-MARCH HE CHAIRED A CONFERENCE ON INVESTMENT IN VIETNAM, WHICH WAS ORGANIZED IN SINGAPORE.

110. (C) HANOI COMMUNIST PARTY CHIEF NGUYEN PHU TRONG, 56, PROMOTED TO SEVENTH IN POLITBURO RANKS, WAS ON THE SHORT LIST FOR GENERAL SECRETARY. BUT IN THE END, TRONG, WHO FORMALLY WAS LAST IN THE PREVIOUS POLITBURO, MAY HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED NOT EXPERIENCED ENOUGH FOR THE TOP POST. ONE OF THE POLITBURO'S MORE IDEOLOGICAL MEMBERS, HAVING SERVED AS HEAD OF IDEOLOGICAL AFFAIRS AND AS EDITOR OF THE "COMMUNIST REVIEW" JOURNAL, TRONG APPEARS TO BE IN THE MOLD OF FORMER GENERAL SECRETARY PHIEU. HE MAY YET BE DESTINED FOR HIGHER THINGS, DEPENDING ON THE STRENGTH OF THE MORE IDEOLOGICAL FACTION WITHIN THE NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE. TRONG WAS DEPICTED ON 35 DATES IN "THE PEOPLE'S DAILY." HE PLAYED A PROMINENT NATIONAL ROLE IN HELPING OVERSEE THE DRAFTING AND EDITING OF THE POLITICAL REPORT, ONE OF THE SEMINAL DOCUMENTS THAT WAS PRESENTED AT THE PARTY CONGRESS APRIL

119. TRONG PRESIDED OVER MEETINGS OF THE HANOI PARTY COMMITTEE AND ATTENDED DISTRICT CONGRESSES OF THE HANOI CPV LEADING UP TO HIS OPENING OF THE CITY'S CONGRESS DECEMBER 13 AND HIS READING OF THE DRAFT POLITICAL REPORT TO THE HANOI PARTY GATHERING ON DEC. 27. TRONG WAS PRIMARILY DEPICTED IN THE MEDIA MANAGING THE AFFAIRS OF THE HANOI PARTY AND INVOLVED IN CITY ISSUES. HE PRESIDED OVER OCTOBER FESTIVITIES FOR THE 990TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF HANOI; HELD WORKING SESSIONS WITH THE HANOI LABOR DEPARTMENT, WITH THE RED CROSS (CONCERNING FLOOD PREVENTION IN THE RED RIVER DELTA), WITH PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC LEADERS IN THE CITY, AND WITH CPV YOUTH UNION AND OTHER SECTORAL GROUPS.

SENIOR PUBLIC FIGURES WHO RETIRED

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111. (C) FATHERLAND FRONT CHAIRMAN PHAM THE DUYET, 64, WHO WAS DROPPED FROM THE POLITBURO AFTER BEING RANKED FIFTH PREVIOUSLY, WAS FEATURED ON 33 DATES DURING THE TRACKING PERIOD. DUYET BATTLED REPORTS OF MISMANAGEMENT AND CORRUPTION THROUGHOUT THE PAST THREE YEARS. HE MAY MAINTAIN HIS ROLE AS HEAD OF THE VIETNAM FATHERLAND FRONT (VFF), THE UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION THAT OVERSEES THE CONSTITUENT SECTORAL GROUPS THAT THE CPV USES TO MANAGE AND CHANNEL NON-GOVERNMENTAL VIETNAMESE GROUPS. HOWEVER, THE FACT HE WAS ALSO DROPPED FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE SUGGESTS HE MAY NOT HOLD THAT POSITION FOR LONG. DUYET'S PRIMARY PUBLIC ACTIVITIES WERE CONNECTED WITH GROUPS AND PROGRAMS OF THE VFF, SUCH AS THE FARMER'S UNION, MASS MOBILIZATION ACTIVITIES, THE OCTOBER 17 "DAY OF THE POOR," THE WOMEN'S UNION, THE YOUTH UNION, AND THE CPV MOUTHPIECE "NHAN DAN" (THE PEOPLE). HE ALSO MET WITH THE HANOI CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP AND LEADERS OF THE NORTHERN PROTESTANT CHURCHES JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS, AND BUDDHIST LEADERS AROUND IMPORTANT FESTIVAL DAYS. KNOWN AS THE POLITBURO'S "TROUBLESHOOTER," DUYET JOURNEYED TO THAI BINH (SITE OF MASS PROTESTS THREE YEARS AGO THAT HE SERVED TO HELPED CONTROL) IN OCTOBER FOR A HISTORICAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROVINCE; THERE HE WAS INTERVIEWED AT LENGTH ON THE CPV'S MASS MOBILIZATION ACTIVITIES. IN THE SPRING HE MADE A WIDELY PUBLICIZED VISIT TO THE HIGHLANDS PROVINCES OF GIA LAI AND DAKLAK, SITE OF FEBRUARY PROTESTS. (DEPUTY PM DUNG'S VISIT SHORTLY AFTER THE PROTESTS BROKE OUT, BY CONTRAST, WAS NOT REPORTED IN THE STATE PRESS AT THE TIME.) DUYET ALSO ATTENDED DISTRICT AND PROVINCIAL PARTY CONGRESSES IN VINH PHU, HAI DUONG, QUANG NAM, HAIPHONG, BAC

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NINH, AND THE PROVINCIAL PARTY CONGRESS IN DANANG IN FEBRUARY.

112. (C) DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN MANH CAM, 71, WAS FEATURED IN THE MEDIA ON 62 OCCASIONS. SINCE BEING REPLACED BY NGUYEN DY NIEN AS FOREIGN MINISTER A YEAR AGO,

CAM WAS WIDELY SEEN AS BEING "KICKED UPSTAIRS" PRIOR TO HIS RETIREMENT AT THE CONGRESS. DESPITE THIS, HE MAINTAINED AN ACTIVE SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC EVENTS AS HE REPRESENTED VIETNAM AT HOME AND ABROAD, AND ALSO AT LEAST NOMINALLY OVERSAW FOREIGN AND TRADE POLICY. DURING THE PERIOD, CAM MET SCORES OF VISITING MINISTERS, INCLUDING THOSE FROM THE U.S., CHINA, ITALY, LAOS, CHILE AND JAPAN. HE ATTENDED THE ASEM III SUMMIT (MEETING THE SOUTH KOREAN AND SPANISH PRIME MINISTERS, AMONG OTHERS) AND MET WITH VISITING FORMER GENERAL DIRECTOR OF GATT DUNKEL. CAM'S MOST PROMINENT TRIP OF THE PERIOD WAS ATTENDING THE APEC SUMMIT IN BRUNEI NOVEMBER 14-18, WHERE HE MET WITH PRESIDENTS CLINTON, PUTIN AND JIANG ON THE MARGINS AND OTHER OFFICIALS, INCLUDING USTR AND U.S. CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS.

LIKELY FUTURE PLAYERS WITH LOW PUBLIC PROFILES

13. (C) CPV ORGANIZATIONAL AFFAIRS CHIEF NGUYEN VAN AN, 63, WHO WAS FEATURED IN THE NATIONAL MEDIA ON ONLY 12 DIFFERENT DATES, POSSESSES MUCH MORE CLOUT THAN HIS PUBLIC PROFILE WOULD SUGGEST. LIKE IN DECEMBER 1997, WHEN HE NARROWLY LOST OUT TO PHIEU, AN WAS RUNNER-UP A SECOND TIME FOR THE TOP JOB. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES, INCLUDING ONE STAFF-LEVEL CONTACT AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, AN IS RUMORED TO BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED TO MOVE TO HEAD THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (TAKING MANH'S PLACE) BEGINNING IN MAY, WHICH WOULD GIVE HIM A MUCH HIGHER PROFILE. (IN THE NEW POLITBURO, HOWEVER, HE WAS DROPPED TO TWELFTH, THE LOWEST RANK OF ANY CONTINUING MEMBER, WHICH SUGGESTS ANOTHER LEADER WITH PERHAPS MORE CLOUT, SUCH AS DUNG OR TRIET, MAY BE DESTINED FOR THE ASSEMBLY.) THROUGHOUT THE TRACKING PERIOD, AN WAS RARELY FEATURED IN THE PRESS. SOME OF HIS APPEARANCES WERE PURELY PROTOCOL-BASED, SUCH AS WHEN HE VISITED THE TOMB OF FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER LE DUC THO IN OCTOBER. OTHERS WERE MORE SUBSTANTIVE: HE DIRECTED ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS ON LESSONS LEARNED FROM CPV CONGRESSES IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND THE CENTRAL REGION, AND HAS WAS FEATURED HOLDING CPV ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS AS WELL. IF HE DOES MOVE TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, AN WOULD FOR THE FIRST TIME EMERGE FROM THE CPV SHADOWS.

14. (C) CPV ECONOMIC COMMISSION HEAD TRUONG TAN SANG, 52, FEATURED IN THE MEDIA ON ONLY 8 DATES, LIKEWISE IS A POTENTIAL FUTURE PLAYER WHO NONETHELESS NOW MAINTAINS A
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VERY LOW PUBLIC PROFILE. FORMERLY HCMC PARTY CHIEF, SANG, LIKE DUNG AND TRIET, IS A YOUNG SOUTHERN REFORMER WHO MAY BE DESTINED FOR HIGHER THINGS. NOT CURRENTLY AS POPULAR AS TRIET, SANG IS PRESENTLY IN A LOW-VISIBILITY JOB AS HEAD OF THE CPV'S LITTLE-KNOWN ECONOMIC COMMISSION. THE FACT THAT THE CPV SEEMS TO HAVE TILTED MORE TOWARD REFORM AT THE NINTH CONGRESS MAY BE RELATED IN PART TO SANG'S WORK. (CONVERSELY, THE JAPANESE EMBASSY HEARD REPORTS PRIOR TO THE CONGRESS THAT SANG WAS IN DANGER OF BEING DROPPED FROM THE POLITBURO BECAUSE OF ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION. IN ANY EVENT, HE SURVIVED, THOUGH RELATIVE TO HIS PEERS HE DROPPED SLIGHTLY IN RANK, WITH NEWCOMER LE HONG ANH, AS WELL AS TRIET, DUNG, TRONG AND DIEN, ALL BYPASSING HIM IN THE RANKS.) DURING THE TRACKING PERIOD, HE ATTENDED PARTY CONGRESSES IN BEN TRE AND OTHER PROVINCES, AND PRESIDED OVER THE JANUARY CPV CONGRESS OF THE CENTRAL ECONOMIC BRANCH.

15. (C) DEFENSE MINISTER SR. LT. GENERAL PHAM VAN TRA, 65, NARROWLY HELD ON TO HIS POLITBURO SEAT, LIKELY IN LARGE PART BECAUSE THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF GOOD CANDIDATES TO REPLACE HIM AS DEFENSE MINISTER. (HE WAS DEMOTED TO ELEVENTH OF 15, WHICH IS VERY LOW INDEED CONSIDERING THAT NORMALLY ELDER MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO ARE RANKED HIGHER IN PROTOCOL RANKS.) TRA IS THE ONLY MILITARY REPRESENTATIVE ON THE NEW 15-MEMBER POLITBURO, WHICH HISTORICALLY IS UNPRECEDENTED IN VIETNAM. TRA HIMSELF IS WEAKENED POLITICALLY BECAUSE OF HIS RECENT CENSURE BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR "MANAGEMENT FAILURES," IN PART FOR ALLOWING LY TONG TO VIOLATE VIETNAMESE AIRSPACE. TRA MAY HAVE SURVIVED BECAUSE HE WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE USE OF
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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ASSETS TO SPY ON MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, WHICH REPORTEDLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEMISE OF PHIEU AND HIS PROTEGE NGAN. (CONTRARILY, HE MAY HAVE SURVIVED AS A TRADEOFF TO MAINTAIN SOME MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE LEADERSHIP.) DURING THE TRACKING PERIOD, TRA WAS DEPICTED IN THE NATIONAL MEDIA ON 25 OCCASIONS, LARGELY IN ATTENDING AND PRESIDING OVER MILITARY FUNCTIONS. HE CO-CHAIRLED THE REVIEW MEETING OF THE MILITARY PARTY COMMITTEE IN FEBRUARY AND ATTENDED THE SOC TRONG PROVINCIAL CPV CONGRESS. IN FEBRUARY HE MET WITH THE VISITING CHINESE DEFENSE MINISTER WITH GENERAL SECRETARY PHIEU.

16. (C) MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY LE MINH HUONG, 64,

SURVIVED IN HIS SECRET POLICE POST AND WAS PROMOTED TO SIXTH IN THE NEW RANKS. (THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY RECENTLY HEARD ANOTHER REPORT FROM MPS CONTACTS THAT HUONG IS IN POOR HEALTH, AND AN ANALYSIS OF THE NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE RANKS SUGGESTS MPS HAS FEWER MEMBERS IN SENIOR CPV RANKS. HOWEVER, MPS REMAINS A POWERFUL FORCE IN VIETNAMESE POLITICAL LIFE.) HUONG WAS DEPICTED IN THE MEDIA ON 13 OCCASIONS, ATTENDING PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES IN THUA THIEN-HUE AND QUANG TRI, AND ATTENDING THE FOUNDING THE YOUTH UNION. OVERALL, THOUGH, HIS ALMOST INVISIBLE PUBLIC PROFILE DOES NOT MATCH HIS BEHIND-THE-SCENES INFLUENCE OR THAT OF HIS MINISTRY IN VIETNAMESE LIFE.

117. (SBU) DANANG COMMUNIST PARTY CHIEF PHAN DIEN, 63, IS ALMOST INVISIBLE IN NATIONAL MEDIA, THOUGH THIS IS MISLEADING. HE WAS FEATURED IN PROMINENT COVERAGE ONLY FIVE TIMES IN THE HANOI AND HO CHI MINH CITY MEDIA, THOUGH HE OF COURSE RECEIVED MORE REGULAR COVERAGE IN THE CENTRAL REGION/DANANG PRESS. WE DO NOT REGULARLY MONITOR THE REGIONAL PRESS FOR THIS PROJECT. DIEN WAS DEPICTED IN NATIONAL MEDIA ATTENDING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF DANANG UNIVERSITY AND CHAIRING MEETINGS OF PERSONNEL QUESTIONS FOR THE CENTRAL PROVINCES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PLANNING MEETINGS. OBVIOUSLY, THE NATIONAL MEDIA GIVE ONLY A THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF DIEN'S ACTIVITIES; LIKE TRONG AND TRIET (WHO HEAD THE COUNTRY'S TWO LARGEST CITY PARTY ORGANIZATIONS), DIEN PRESIDED OVER DISTRICT AND PROVINCIAL CPV PREPARATIONS FOR THE PARTY CONGRESS. HOWEVER, THESE ACTIVITIES RECEIVED SCANT ATTENTION IN NATIONAL MEDIA. HE WAS DEPICTED JOURNEYING TO QUANG NAM'S CPV CONGRESS IN MID-DECEMBER. OVERALL, DESPITE HIS LOW NATIONAL PROFILE, DIEN APPEARS TO HAVE A GOOD REPUTATION AMONG HIS COLLEAGUES. FOLLOWING THE MASSIVE FLOODING OF TWO YEARS AGO IN THE CENTRAL REGION, THE CPV REPORTEDLY DISPATCHED DIEN TO PROVIDE A STEADY HAND TO HELP THE REGION RECOVER. HE MAY RISE TO MORE PROMINENCE IN THE FUTURE.

MEMBERS WITH LOW PUBLIC PROFILES WHO RETIRED
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118. (C) PAVN POLITICAL DIRECTOR LT. GENERAL PHAM THANH NGAN'S DROP FROM THE POLITBURO IS THE MOST STRIKING, THOUGH HE ALWAYS HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS PHIEU'S PROTEGE. AS NOTED ABOVE AND DOCUMENTED IN DATT REPORTING, NGAN'S FALL WITH PHIEU APPEARS TO OWE IN LARGE PART TO THE MISUSE OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AGAINST THEIR POLITBURO COLLEAGUES. UNTIL RECENTLY NGAN, 62, WAS SEEN AS POTENTIALLY A RISING STAR, WHO MIGHT FOLLOW PHIEU (AS A MILITARY POLITICAL COMMISSAR) TO HIGHER RANKS IN THE CPV. DURING THE TRACKING PERIOD, HE WAS DEPICTED IN THE NATIONAL MEDIA 19 TIMES, MOSTLY IN MILITARY CEREMONIAL FUNCTIONS. HE CO-CHAIRING THE REVIEW OF THE CPV MILITARY COMMITTEE IN FEBRUARY, ATTENDED CEREMONIES HONORING MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S ARMY, AND VISITED MILITARY UNITS AND HOSPITALS DURING TET.

119. (C) HO CHI MINH POLITICAL ACADEMY DIRECTOR NGUYEN DUC BINH, 73, WHO WAS FEATURED 20 TIMES IN NATIONAL MEDIA, HAS BEEN SLATED FOR RETIREMENT FOR SOME TIME. THE OLDEST POLITBURO MEMBER, BINH SERVED FOR TEN YEARS IN THE HIGHEST BODY. HE HELD SOME INFLUENCE AS A CPV ELDER AND A FORMER "TEACHER" FOR MOST OF HIS POLITBURO COLLEAGUES, SINCE MOST OF THEM HAD PASSED THROUGH THE ACADEMY AS PART OF THEIR CPV TRAINING. ACCORDING TO SOME REPORTS, BINH WAS ONE OF THOSE WHO HELPED PUT A BRAKE ON THE BTA 18 MONTHS AGO. DURING THIS PERIOD, HE HEADED UP AN IDEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE SHARING LESSONS OF SOCIALIST DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CHINA IN NOVEMBER. HE ATTENDED PARTY CONGRESSES IN HOA BINH, HA TAY, AND YEN BAI.

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120. (C) NGUYEN THI XUAN MY, 60, HEAD OF THE CPV CENTRAL CONTROL DEPARTMENT, WAS DROPPED FROM SENIOR CPV RANKS DESPITE BEING THE ONLY WOMAN WHO HAS EVER SERVED IN THE POLITBURO. UNTIL RECENTLY THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM WAS THAT THE CPV WOULD WANT TO KEEP HER -- OR PROMOTE ANOTHER WOMAN TO TAKE HER PLACE -- TO MAINTAIN A FACADE OF INCLUSIVENESS AT THE TOP OF THE CPV. HOWEVER, SHE WAS SHARPLY CRITICIZED IN CPV RANKS FOR THE FAILURES OF THE CRITICISM/SELF-CRITICISM CAMPAIGN AND CORRUPTION PROBLEMS IN PARTY RANKS. SHE WAS FEATURED 16 TIMES IN THE NATIONAL MEDIA DURING THIS PERIOD. SHE DEALT WITH THE CENTRAL UNITS OF THE CPV AND ATTENDED PARTY CONGRESSES IN VINH PHUC AND HUNG YEN PROVINCES. (NOTE: LABOR MINISTER NGUYEN THI HANG, WHO MAINTAINED A CENTRAL COMMITTEE SEAT AT THE CONGRESS, IS WIDELY MENTIONED AS A POSSIBLE VICE PRESIDENT, WHICH WOULD PLACE HER AS THE COUNTRY'S HIGHEST-RANKING WOMAN. THOUGH THE NEW 15-MEMBER POLITBURO HAS NO WOMEN, MS. TONG THI PHONG, PARTY CHIEF OF SON LA PROVINCE, WAS NAMED TO THE NINE-MEMBER POLITBURO SECRETARIAT.)

121. (SBU) CPV IDEOLOGY CHIEF LE XUAN TUNG, 64, DEPICTED 24 TIMES IN THE NATIONAL MEDIA, RETIRED AS LONG EXPECTED. TUNG IS IN POOR HEALTH, AND HE WAS LUCKY TO HANG ON TO HIS POLITBURO SEAT AFTER BEING BOOTED AS HANOI PARTY CHIEF 18 MONTHS AGO. DURING THE RATING PERIOD, TUNG SPOKE AT THE PARTY CONGRESSES OF AGENCIES UNDER CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONTROL, AS WELL AS CPV CONGRESSES IN NAM DINH, THAI BINH, AND NINH BINH. HE HAS MAINTAINED A LOW PROFILE SINCE ASSUMING HIS PRESENT ROLE.

COMMENT

122. (C) WITH THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD THIS PAST WEEKEND TO A YOUNGER LEADERSHIP, IT IS STRIKING TO OBSERVE HOW MANY OF THOSE WHO ADVANCED IN THE NEW POLITBURO -- ESPECIALLY MANH, TRIET AND DUNG -- ARE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE HAD "PUBLIC" RESPONSIBILITIES THAT HAVE ENABLED THEM TO BUILD BROADER CONSTITUENCIES OF SUPPORT. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THAT HAS HELPED THEM WHEN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS HAS GONE PAST THE POLITBURO TO THE BROADER CENTRAL COMMITTEE. BUT ONE CANNOT IGNORE THE FACT THAT SOME OF THE CONTINUING MAJOR POWERS IN THIS SECRETIVE BODY -- HUONG AND AN FOR EXAMPLE - - BIDE THEIR TIME IN THE SHADOWS. WE WILL BE INTERESTED TO OBSERVE WHETHER THE NEW POLITBURO WILL DIFFER FROM THE OLD IN ITS CONTRASTING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACES. END COMMENT.
PETERSON

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